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Subject: St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Bridgeton residents get offer to move to hotels because of landfill stench

Bridgeton residents get offer to move to hotels because of landfill stench

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http://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/health/health-matters/bridgeton-residents-get-offer-to-move-to-hotels-because-of/article_4552ecbe-a92c-5837-b1ca-96b2e28bc842.html

Foul odors from the Bridgeton Sanitary Landfill are expected to get worse this month, prompting the owner to offer nearby residents a free hotel stay away from the site.

People who live within a one-mile radius of the landfill were told Tuesday that they can move to a hotel when work on the landfill is expected to cause odors to worsen. Republic Services of Phoenix, which owns the landfill, is offering to pay for lodging from May 20 to June 14 for 270 households in the Spanish Village subdivision, Terrisan Reste mobile home community and some residents of Carrollton Village condominiums.

The extended-stay hotels will be three miles or more from the landfill and will accept pets, company officials said. Residents who choose to stay with friends or relatives instead can receive \$125 each week.

Shirley Twyford lives in the Terrisan Reste community along with a stepdaughter and two young granddaughters, including a 1-year-old who has trouble breathing.

Twyford said she needs two inhalers to get through the day and might consider moving the family to a hotel if the smell becomes unbearable.

The offer came as the stench from the landfill grew especially strong this week because of low winds and high barometric pressure, as well as underground work at the site, the state Department of Natural Resources reported Tuesday.

The intense smell of burning garbage has reached inside the operating room and doctors' offices at DePaul Health Center in Bridgeton, staff members said on a Facebook page dedicated to two landfills in the area. DePaul sits across Interstate 270 from the landfill.

Hospital staff have posted signs in the waiting rooms on a few days in the last two months when the smell has been strongest. However, a hospital spokeswoman said there have been very few complaints from staff members and no reports of patients having problems with the smell.

Julie Edmonds, a nurse at the Physicians Surgery Center at DePaul, said the odor was inside the building on Tuesday and turned stomachs. Edmonds, who also lives in

Bridgeton, said her main concern is whether the smells are more than just annoying.

“Is it just smelly trash, or is it really a dangerous chemical?” Edmonds asked. “I just want to know what’s in the air.”

The most recent air quality data from the state Department of Natural Resources showed a potential short-term health risk from high levels of hydrogen sulfide on three afternoons in February. Earlier testing showed levels of benzene near the landfill’s property line that would be unhealthy with long-term exposure. Measurements of radioactivity and carbon monoxide have not reached levels of concern, according to the agency.

The smell is the result of smoldering trash at the 52-acre Bridgeton landfill that took in waste from 1985 to 2004. High temperatures have been recorded in the southern section, 1,200 feet from the West Lake Landfill. Residents and environmental groups have raised concerns about the proximity to West Lake, which contains nuclear waste from atomic bomb production. State officials have said the possibility of a fire reaching the radioactive materials is remote.

Residents as far away as Creve Coeur and St. Charles have reported smelling the foul odor in the last few years. High temperatures in some gas-extraction wells at the landfill were recorded starting in 2010. One underground hot spot reached a temperature of 310 degrees in March. The normal range of temperatures inside landfills is 130 or lower.

Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster has sued Republic Services on eight charges of violating state environmental laws. A hearing in that case is scheduled to start Tuesday May 14.

The letter sent to residents on Tuesday said Republic wants to be a good neighbor by offering the temporary housing program. Upcoming work at the landfill involves excavating parts of the site to remove concrete pipes and is expected to release strong odors.

State health officials have said the odor can cause headaches, irritation to the eyes, nose and throat and difficulty breathing, especially for residents with asthma and other respiratory issues. Staff and students at Rose Acres Elementary and Pattonville High schools have posted on social media about smelling the odor during classes.

Sixth-grader Amish Sharma lives in the Carrollton condominiums and said he has been getting headaches in the last month that he attributes to the odor.

“I used to play outside, but when it is smelling I usually stay home,” said Amish, 12.

Residents aren’t the only people who said they need relief from the smell.

“It’s great that they’re addressing residents’ concerns, but the people who work out there are the economic backbone of the neighborhood,” said Laura Dankel, who works at the Riverport business park in Maryland Heights and said she left work Tuesday with a burning throat and stinging eyes.

A kickball league canceled plans to start a summer session at the Maryland Heights Sportport facility because of the stench. Ted McCluskey runs Midwest Kickball and said they have been looking to expand to the northwest area of St. Louis.

“We went out there twice (in early April) and every time we got out there we could barely open the door,” McCluskey said. “You hear it’s bad, but when you go out there, it’s surprising. There’s no way our players would want to be out there for an afternoon. It’s a great location, but we just couldn’t work with the smell.”

A spokesman for Republic Services says the company responds to concerns from the area and is installing misting systems to help deodorize the landfill.

Mike Dailey has lived in the Spanish Village neighborhood since 1999 and said the odor has not helped his chronic lung disease. Dailey said he isn't sure if he will take the offer to relocate to a hotel and has concerns about leaving neighborhood homes empty. He just wants the problem to get fixed.

"We thought we had a nice little house in a nice little place," Dailey said. "Three years ago it starts stinking like hell."

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